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PP RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #2867/01 2381813  
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FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3030  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BAGHDAD 002867

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/26/2017

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SUBJECT: MALIKI'S STAFF -- INSIDE THE PRIME MINISTER'S  
OFFICE

Classified By: Political Counselor Matthew Tueller for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

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SUMMARY  
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¶1. (C) Summary: The professional staff of the Prime Minister's Office is dominated by a small circle of trusted advisors, who travel with the Prime Minister and are often present at major meetings. The remaining advisors struggle with lack of information, infrastructure constraints, and movement restrictions that often sap their initiative. However, they always seem to have the energy to pursue their elusive quest for a highly coveted International Zone blue badge. End Summary.

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POLITICAL SECTION PORTFOLIOS  
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¶2. (C) The professional staff of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) has at least 54 advisors, including one chief of staff, 23 general directors and 30 "advisors." The heavyweight advisors tend to be in the group of general directors (although one notable exception to this rule is Dr. Basema Al-Saa'di, PM Maliki's infamous aide for national security). Maliki's professional staff (with known portfolios indicated) include:

- Dr. Tarik Najem Abdullah (Chief of Staff (COS), Refugees, Detainees)

- General Directors

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- Mr. Mohammed Selman Al-Sa'di (deputy COS, reconciliation)  
- Ambassador Sadiq Ibrahim Al-Rikabi (external relations)  
- Mr. Yassen Majeed Mohammed (media)  
- Mr. Ahmed Abd Al-Ameer Al-Sa'dawi (pol mil, security)  
- Ms. Dhuha Ahmed Jassem Al-Zubaidi (U.N., human rights)  
- Mr. Fadhel Mohammed Redha Al-Shar'i (provincial affairs)  
- Mr. Abdullah Mohammed Bender (economics, hydrocarbons)  
- Kamal Al-Basri  
- Madhi Abbas Muta'b  
- Ahmed Abdullah Joda  
- Naheda Hameed Lafta  
- Ali Abd Al-Resool Al-Aushekar  
- Shemran Serkal Yunis  
- Ali Hadi Mohammed Al-Mossawi  
- Hussein Ali Jaber Al-Wassiti  
- Majeed Mustafa Majeed  
- Abaas Alwan Hussein  
- Dr. Khalil Mukhef Al-Robaiy  
- Dr. Hori Yassen Al-Hiti  
- Dr. Raji Abdullah Abdul Hussein  
- Dr. Zeki Dhaher Ali Al-Imara

- Sabah Yassen Awni
- Dr. Rafi' Khudher Shubar

- Advisors

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- Mr. Georges Ya'qub Bakoos (external relations)
- Ms. Maryam Taleb Al-Rayes (women's issues)
- Dr. Batool Qassim Nasser (female) (education)
- Dr. Abdul-Hussein Mohammed Al-Anbaki (economics)
- Fadhel Mohammed Jawad Kadhum (legal advisor)
- Dr. Basema Al-Saa'di (national security)
- Sa'ad Mohammed Hussein Al-Ameli
- Dhia Al-Dean Al-Quraishi
- Hussein Bareka Al-Shami
- Bassem Redha Al-Husseini
- Taleb Shegati Meshari
- Ali Khudheir Hasson Al-Shemmari
- Haq Mohammed Redha Al-Hakim
- Abdul Azziz Ibrahim Al-Timimi
- Sa'adoon Al-Dulaimi
- Sa'ad Saleh Jabbur
- Hussan Shubbar
- Al-Sheik Abdul-Haleem Al-Zuhairi
- Abdul-Kareem Faraj Mohammed Ali Al-Bukhati
- Abdul-Rahim Ahmed Ali Hassan Al-Hussein
- Dr. Amal Musa Hussein
- Thamer Abbas Ghadhbani
- Dr. Hanan Sa'aed Mohammed Al-Fetlawi
- Farooq Abdullah Abdul-Rehman
- Abdul-Ilah Qassem Al-Ameer
- Hashem Nasser Mahmud Al-Mossawi
- Hamdia Abbas Mohammed Al-Husseini
- Dr. Ghazi Radhi Rekan

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- Sa'ad Abdul-Majeed Ibrahim
- Raji Abdullah Al-Sehlani

13. (C) Nearly all of the advisors are Shi'ites, and most are from Maliki's Da'wa party. In February, 2007 the Prime Minister directed Ambassador Sadiq Al-Rikabi's external relations office to add two additional advisors, one of whom was to be a Sunni as a gesture of reconciliation. As of August, 2007 the Sunni advisor has not been hired and recruiting efforts appear to have fizzled out. Al-Rikabi claimed to have not been able to find someone qualified and whom they trusted among the Sunnis, asserting on one occasion to Poloff "we failed to find people we can work with." Georges Bakoos is the lone Christian among the political advisors.

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TIGHT CIRCLE OF TRUST  
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14. (C) Dr. Tarik, the Chief of Staff, personally handles portfolios deemed sensitive, such as refugees, internally displaced persons, and detainees, and other staff members defer questions on those topics to him. According to Al-Rikabi, four of the general directors are particularly close to Maliki and act as "personal advisors." The list includes Mohammed Selman Al-Sa'di (who is often the acting chief of staff when Dr. Tarik is absent), Yassen Majeed Mohammed, and Al-Rikabi himself; he did not identify the fourth, although Polad Georges Bakoos later suggested to Poloff that Al-Rikabi was probably thinking of Ahmed Abd Al-Ameer Al-Sa'dawi.

15. (C) Poloffs observed that during the August, 2007 United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) mandate renewal discussions between the Prime Minister and the Ambassador, the Prime Minister clearly deferred to Al-Rikabi's suggestions on the mandate language. Unfortunately, Al-Rikabi's unfamiliarity with the United Nations generally

and Security Council operations specifically created unnecessary difficulties during the mandate renewal. Minister of Foreign Affairs Hoshyar Zebari expressed frustration to Pol Counselor that the PM was listening to advisors inexperienced in this field. Al-Rikabi has also accompanied the Prime Minister on some of his most sensitive regional trips, such as to the 2007 Neighbor's Conference in Sharm El-Sheikh, to Ankara, to Damascus, and to Teheran.

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LIMITED COMMUNICATIONS  
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¶6. (C) During the months of February through May 2007, Ms. Dhuha Al-Zubaidi, the director general for the United Nations portfolio, and Mr. Georges Bakoos, an advisor for external affairs, both complained to poloff about the lack of communication between the Prime Minister's Office and the UNAMI political officers. With little effort, poloff arranged a regular meeting among the political officers of the PMO, UNAMI, Post, and the UK Embassy. While the PM advisors commented how useful these meetings were, poloff learned through further discussions that the PM advisors had never requested or initiated such a meeting before.

¶7. (C) The PMO has liaison officers in each of the ministries, but they are ineffective according to Bakoos. On one occasion, Bakoos asked the Embassy to provide to the PMO information generated by the Iraqi ministries that was delivered to the Iraq Transition Assistance Office, admitting that no one in the PMO could get the data in a timely manner through regular Iraqi liaison channels.

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INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES  
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¶8. (C) The Prime Minister's Office suffers from physical infrastructure challenges that sometimes disrupt meetings. The power will go out, plunging the building into darkness. Our interlocutors are so used to this that they will sit in the darkness and continue talking without missing a beat. In addition, their email exchange server went down in July 2007 and, one month later, remains inoperative. Without access to their office email systems, the advisors use their personal yahoo and hotmail accounts. Communications are sometimes thwarted when their yahoo email filter identifies poloffs' communications as spam.

¶9. (C) The Prime Minister's Office is allocated an allotment

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of ten International Zone blue badges, which Chief of Staff Dr. Tarik has dispensed among the advisors. These blue badges have the highest status in the International Zone and allow the bearer unimpeded access through the bypass lanes at the International Zone checkpoints. Relegated to lesser status green and yellow badges, the other 44 director generals and advisors are required to wait between 30 and 90 minutes every time they cross a checkpoint. As a result, they are hesitant to leave the office for meetings and always inquire about how they might get their badges upgraded. Dr. Tarik recently requested an increase in the PM's allotment of blue badges, and the request is pending with Multi National Force - Iraq. The obsession with badges in the International Zone matches that for visas in developing countries.

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WE DON'T HAVE AN ORGANIZATION CHART  
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¶10. (C) Over the first half of 2007, US, UK and UNAMI poloffs joined efforts and repeatedly attempted to obtain an organization chart of the Prime Minister's Office. Although we obtained lists of names and hand drawn pencil diagrams, we were not able to obtain an actual chart. On different

occasions, political advisors Bakoos, Al-Rayes, and Al-Zubaidi apologized and said that they had never seen such a chart, and only Dr. Tarik would know if one existed. When asked about the lengthy lists of names, Bakoos implied that some of the 30 names on the advisors list were non-professional advisors, such as relatives of the Prime Minister, although he wouldn't specify which ones.

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